6: Tomasic E-4 (1947-1948) 1953 RF1 Great Russia RF1

God a wrathful, irate and revengeful Old Man, but the Church leaders themselves, affected by the conditions of their society, were inclined to emphasize the fear aspect of the Christian God rather than his love and compassion. They also tended to preoccupy themselves with death, describing it as a terror-striking event. In some early Church sermons even the messengers of God, the angels, were represented in a terrifying manner:

> Then, two angels appear, sent by God for the soul. As soon as the soul has seen them, it will be horrified; all its image and beauty and face will change; feet and hands will be torpid, and the hearing as with the tongue will be chained by silence; and man will be all sorrowful and invalid and woeful; and afterwards, appears death. And then, with a terrible pain the soul will issue from the body . . .[37]

These feelings of anxieties and fears, combined perhaps with a strong sense of guilt of the Church leaders, are manifested in the life histories of most Russian saints. These people, as portrayed in their hagiographies, were being constantly threatened by temptations and intimidations of dreadful demons. Hallucinations about demons became very frequent among the monks, and struggle against demons became one of the main aspects of ascetic life. Whole herds of these fiends were sometimes seen by the ascetics. The demons would disguise themselves as humans, as angels, and even as Christ, or they would appear in their true beastly form.[38]

Consistent with this gloomy and terrifying view of life and death was also an apocalyptic picture of the end of the world as pictured by Church leaders. According to the old Russian sermons the end of the world was very near and it was to ensue in fire and floods of blood brought about by a wrathful and revengeful God, (a picture that strongly reminds one of the vision of the end of the world found in the beliefs of the steppe nomads of Central Asia):

> Then undying fire will flow from the East to the West, devouring mountains, stones, trees, and the sea. The firmament will be dried up and turned like brick bats, and all existing things, except men, will melt in a like way by the rate of the fire. All the earth will be burned; and through this undying fire all mankind has to pass.

6. Tomasic E-4 (1947-1948) 1953 RFI Great Russia RFI

565 154 [761] *(S bedoyu ne perekoryaisya, terpi!)*. And then if life is all suffering, why be afraid of death, he would ask himself. "Be afraid to live, do not be afraid to die! To live is more terrible than to die"; "We do not rejoice in life, but in death."[10]

565 785 788 Identification with suffering and preoccupation with death which has been conditioned by family experiences and reinforced on the community level led the Russian peasants to practice long and hard fasts, and to undertake difficult pilgrimages to far off places of worship. "There is only one salvation, fast and prayer"; "We don't live on bread, but on prayer" they would say. Long and hard fasting and prayer of the Great-Russian peasants were not only manifestations of his identification with suffering and his feeling of helplessness and complete dependency upon superior forces, but were perhaps also expressions of his tendency to completely retire from an unsatisfactory and an unhappy world.

792 156 The extremes of this suffering and withdrawal from the world were reached by anchorites who sought complete solitude in wild deserts "far away from men," and by those hermits who lived self-buried in the catacombs, away not only from man, but also from the light of day. Such people enjoyed among the peasants the fame of saints and were believed to possess miraculous powers. Many peasants would make vows of pilgrimage to places where such people lived self-buried, isolated and withdrawn from all human contact.

III

565 156 The peasant's complete submission to unpredictable and arbitrary forces was enhanced because of the lack of solidarity among the peasants themselves. After the peasant had been subjected to arbitrary regimentation and to permanent policing on the part of the authorities, he began to lose faith not only in the authorities but in his fellow peasants as well. Thus mistrust and suspiciousness rooted in patriarchal relations were heightened. In such circumstances the peasant became increasingly distrustful of his neighbors, tended to withdraw within his own family and to become himself ready to spy on others.[11]

In such conditions when isolated, helpless and self-oriented,